

NASA Administrator

Daniel S. Goldin

Eileen Collins Announcement

The White House

March 5, 1998

We're here to honor Eileen Collins, the first woman ever selected to be a commander for a NASA shuttle mission.

But let me begin by saying what a privilege it is to be introduced by someone who also happens to be a role model to so many women . . . someone who is so dedicated to service . . . and someone who has done so much for children around the world.

Hillary Rodham Clinton.

It is also an honor, of course, to be standing up here with her husband.

I'd like to thank President Clinton for all he's done, especially for all he has done for our future and our children through his commitment to our nation's space program.

It has been said that "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus."

I can assure you all . . . at NASA, we have stayed out of that debate.

But we are here today because we know that it takes women to explore Mars and Venus.

We are here because it takes women to open the space frontier and enrich the lives of all Americans.

And we are here today because it takes brave and talented women like Eileen Collins to remind us of simple but profound truths:

To discover new worlds, we must break down old barriers.

Our only discriminating quality should be excellence.

When it comes to pioneering the future, we need the best and the brightest.

At NASA, we have been committed to that.

Today, we can say that our astronaut corps does not only have its first woman commander, which is so exciting and important to our future . . . but we can also say that our astronaut corps is more diverse than ever.

And thanks to these women and men who risk their lives, this past year was marked by wonderful shuttle missions that brought back unbelievable science . . . and made possible the continuing preparations for the International Space Station.

Today, we can say that there are more women scientists and engineers at NASA than ever before.

Their work helped make possible the breathtaking images from the Hubble Telescope . . . and the success of the Mars Pathfinder.

But, Mr. President and Mrs. Clinton, perhaps the most exciting thing we can say today and during this National Women's History Month is this:

At NASA . . . we're just getting started.

Because while Eileen Collins is commanding the shuttle in orbit. . . she will also be commanding an audience of young people here on Earth.

Young girls are going to look up to America's newest hero . . . and decide that they want to be scientists . . . they want to be engineers . . . they want to be not only astronauts . . . but commanders.

And because of Eileen Collins and those who came before her -- the Sally Rides' and the Shannon Lucids' -- they'll know that in America . . . being that commander . . .

or even Commander-in-Chief . . .

is possible.

What a wonderful day for America.

It is now my distinct honor and high privilege to introduce to you one of NASA's best . . .

Commander . . . Eileen Collins.

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